

NEWS RELEASE

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Producers see information as key for beating worms in sheep

In a state that battles year-round with worms, Tasmanian sheep producers are arming themselves with the latest information and advice to keep on top of potential and developing worm issues.

Paul Nilon, an animal health consultant based south of Launceston with 30 years' experience in sheep health and production, said a recent meeting of producers revealed that roughly half were using the WormBoss website and actively seeking information to help guide their worm control decisions.

First developed in 2005 by the Cooperative Research Centre for Sheep Industry Innovation (Sheep CRC) and subsequently hosted by Australian Wool Innovation (AWI) until 2012, when it was significantly upgraded again by the CRC, the WormBoss website is designed to help producers develop management plans specifically for their local environment.

The website, www.wormboss.com.au, also allows producers to access advice and worm control tools, including a database to assist with drench selection. Mr Nilon was a contributing expert in developing the regional specific guidelines that are available for producers on the site.

"The regionalised control programs available through the site are an invaluable resource for producers wanting to find specific information about their area including suggestions for grazing management, worm testing, recommended drenching times and managing drench resistance," Mr Nilon said.

Mr Nilon runs an animal health consultancy business, Nilon Farm Health. He is also a contributor to the monthly updates distributed by WormBoss and helped develop the regional worm control program for Tasmania on the WormBoss website.

"I recommend worm testing for my clients, which is also a key feature of the WormBoss control program for Tasmania. Worm egg counts have important implications for drench programs and grazing management which flow onto activities such as preparing special worm-free paddocks for weaning," Mr Nilon said.

"There is always a need for specific information at the farm level, as worm problems vary from farm to farm. However, as a reference point, the WormBoss control programs provide an excellent resource for producers to better understand the issues and options for their particular area, including climatic considerations and resistance of parasites to a range of drench types."

Mr Nilon said that a number of resources on the WormBoss site were particularly important for Tasmanian producers, as parasite control was not as straightforward as in other states.

"Western Australia has a long hot spell over summer that disrupts parasite life cycles and the Northern Tablelands of NSW have severe winter frosts that can keep barbers pole levels low," Mr Nilon said.

"Tasmania has a mild climate with no pasture de-contamination period and when you throw in a period of extreme wet weather - the worm problems have the potential to explode.



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“Black scour worm in particular survives easily in the cold and can pose a big problem with a period of high rainfall. It’s therefore really important to have local understanding of these kinds of issues.”

According to Mr Nilon, even if producers have an effective worm control program in place, resources such as the monthly WormBoss updates can alert them to new information and prompt improvements in their worm control programs.

“Recently we’ve been looking at changing resistance statuses and relaying this information via the monthly updates. This could be important information for producers and mean a change in their current management of worms,” Mr Nilon said.

The WormBoss website also provides links to leading advisers in each state, as well as advice on grazing management to reduce infection, breeding methods to increase resistance, and information on the importance of nutrition.

- For more information on worm control visit WormBoss at www.wormboss.com.au

CAPTION: Paul Nilon, Nilon Farm Health, is a contributor to the monthly updates distributed by WormBoss and helped develop the regional worm control program for Tasmania on the WormBoss website.

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